

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
Case File No: AA-81924  
AK-040-03-EA-008

Applicant: Bureau of Land Management  
Anchorage Field Office  
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Type of Action: Chenik Bay Cleanup

Location: Sec. 22, T. 11 S., R. 29 W., Seward Meridian

Prepared by: Kathy Stubbs  
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to remove structures and material built in Sec. 22, T. 11 S., R. 29 W., Seward Meridian, Chenik Bay, Alaska.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

These lands are selected by the State of Alaska and the State of Alaska will not take title to the lands unless the structures and materials are removed. These lands adjoin the McNeill River State Game Refuge. This specific selection is high on the State's priority list for conveyance.

B. Conformance with Land Use Plan:

The Proposed Action has been reviewed and found to be in compliance with the Southcentral Management Framework Plan (MFP), March 1980. Objective Number L-1 of the MFP states the BLM intends to "Satisfy State and local government needs as well as public and/or private demonstrated needs for land as they arise."

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Plans or other Environmental Analyses:

The following laws provide for BLM's authority to take action on unauthorized use, occupancy or development of public lands: The Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Secs. 302, 303, 310 and 511; Unlawful Occupancy or Inclosures Act of February 25, 1885; and regulations 43 CFR 9232, (Realty Trespass Abatement).

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to remove structures and other improvements located at the Chenik Bay Camp in Sec. 22, T. 11 S., R. 29 W., Seward Meridian, Chenik Bay, Alaska. The camp consists of the following structures:

- 1 main building with sleeping loft, storage shed and deck
- 3 one-room cabins
- 2 wooden platforms for wall tents
- 1 wooden platform for yurt
- 1 sauna
- 1 storage shed/shower
- 4 wooden outhouses

A survey of the site will be conducted to determine the presence of any hazardous materials. If hazardous materials are found to be present, they will be removed and properly disposed prior to demolition of the structures. Materials will be

removed from the structure that emits pollutants in violation of the Clean Air Act prior to burning.

A BLM staff or a BLM contractor will dismantle the camp in early summer 2003. A cleanup crew of up to 25 people will be on site for less than a week. While there, they will be camping in tents for the duration of the project. Access to the site will be by barge, floatplane or helicopter.

The structures will be dismantled using hand tools. All metal, glass and non-combustible materials from structures will be transported to an approved State of Alaska disposal site. All combustible materials will be moved to 3-4 locations for burning. Once the materials have been burned, the burn sites will be raked and non-combustible materials removed for disposal and transported to an approved State of Alaska disposal site.

Rocks, foundations, and other natural materials indicating camp improvements will be dispersed randomly over the area. Outhouse holes will be filled in following the State of Alaska requirements. Crews will restore the areas occupied by the structures to a natural condition.

- B. No Action Alternative:  
The No Action Alternative is to leave the site in its present state. The buildings and other facilities would remain in place but no use of the facility would be allowed.
- C. Alternative 1: This Alternative is the same as the Proposed Action except the structures would be dismantled, barged to Homer and disposed of in a State of Alaska approved disposal site.

### III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

- A. Critical Elements:  
The following critical elements of the human environment were not present or will not be affected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives and will receive no further discussion.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern  
Environmental Justice  
Farmlands (Prime or Unique)  
Floodplains  
Invasive, Non-native Species  
Native American Religious Concerns

Wetlands/Riparian Zones  
Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Wilderness

1. Air Quality:  
Air quality is good in this area.
2. Cultural Resources:  
There are no known cultural resources near the land affected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives. No further consultation is necessary under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
3. Subsistence – ANILCA, Section 810:  
The Proposed Action does not occur on Federal Public Lands as defined in ANILCA Sec. 102(3), therefore, does not fall under the regulatory authority of the Federal Subsistence Board and appropriate Federal Subsistence Regulations for harvest of wildlife, fish and shellfish on Federal Public Lands in Alaska.
4. Threatened and Endangered Species:  
There is no rare or sensitive plant or animal species known to occur in the project area. No consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considered necessary pursuant to Section 7 of the Act.
5. Waste, Hazardous and Solid:  
The site has not been inventoried to determine if any hazardous materials are present. Because of the age of the structures and uses made, it is possible that some hazardous materials such as lead point, lead acid batteries, etc. may be present.
6. Water Quality, Surface/Ground:  
Surface water quality is good in the area. There may be some limited surface erosion around the buildings and trails. Ground water quality is good in the area. No information is available to determine if there is any ground water contamination from the outhouses.

- B. Vegetation:  
The site is on a bench above the shore of Kamishak Bay of the Gulf of Alaska, below the Chigmit Mountains. It is part of the Alaska Peninsula land resource area of Southcentral Alaska. The dominant vegetation on the site is alder, willows, crowberry, grasses, forbs, sedges and mosses.

- C. Recreation:  
Chenik Head has high recreational values due to its geographical location; underlying its natural, scenic and visual beauty. During the summer months there is a red salmon run that travels up the Chenik River and into Chenik Lake. The McBride Camp lies just south of the outflow in a prime wildlife and scenic location.
- D. Visual Resource Management:  
With a wide and unobstructed view of Kamishak Bay and Augustine Island, Chenik Head has a high visual value.
- E. Wildlife Resources:  
The Chenik Head area supports a variety of animal species. Coastal shrub habitats support microtine rodents and at least 50 species of resident and migrant land birds. Non-resident mammal species include fox, coyote, wolf and brown bear. These animals may move through the area in search of prey. Many migrant birds pass through the area during spring and fall migration, including several raptor and many neo-tropical land bird species. In summer, a run of sockeye salmon migrates up Chenik River to spawn in Chenik Lake. Brown bears frequent the area during the salmon run and afterwards when fish carcasses are available. Moose and caribou may be found infrequently in the area.
- The Chenik area is within Game Management Unit 9A and the McNeil State Game Refuge. The area is closed to brown bear hunting, but open to all other hunted species. The nearby McNeil River State Game Sanctuary is closed to all hunting and trapping.
- F. Fire:  
The area is in a full suppression category. This requires aggressive response to new ignitions.

#### IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

- A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:
1. Critical Elements:
    - a. Air Quality:  
Air quality in the immediate area will decrease from the smoke generated by the burning of the structures. Impacts will be short term and cease shortly after the burning ends.
    - b. Waste, Hazardous and Solid:  
Solid wastes will be generated as part of structure demolition.

c. Water Quality, Surface/Ground:

There will be a slight increase in surface soil erosion during removal and after, until vegetation re-establishes. As a result, there will be a slight decrease in surface water quality for the first full growing season.

Ground water quality will improve as a result of the Proposed Action. The removal of the structures will eliminate the use of the outhouse/pit toilets causing any negative impact to dissipate.

2. Vegetation:

Cabin structures would be knocked down and burned in 3-4 places. Bare soil would be exposed from underneath the cabins, as well as from burning. Bare soil may also be exposed to foot traffic. Alder is a very aggressive recolonizer, as are crowberry and willow, so the impacts from incidental burning of the vegetation would be short term and minimal. Sedges and mosses grow more slowly, so any burning in areas dominated with mosses would take a longer time to revegetate. Soils will be sterilized to varying degrees where combustible materials are burned. This will depend on the amount of material burned, length of the burn, soil type, and soil moisture. This may slow reestablishment of vegetation in these areas.

3. Recreation:

The removal of structures will have the affect of increasing dispersed recreational activities. With the lack of structures, this area retains its natural appearance and provides outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

4. Visual Resources:

The removal of structures will have the affect of returning the land to a Class I landscape. The restoration of the previous character of the landscape, in time, will be completed though natural ecological changes.

5. Wildlife Resources:

The removal of structures will cause increased noise and disruption during demolition of the structures, but will be of short duration. Smoke from the burning of combustible materials may temporarily displace most wildlife from the area. Under the Proposed Action, there is potential for conflicts between people and bears, and it could cause bears to be shot in defense of life and property.

6. Fire:  
Fire is not always predictable as it can be affected by many variables. There is a small chance that fire could escape into unwanted areas. This could cause damage to other resources in the surrounding areas.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

1. Critical Elements:
  - a. Water Quality, Surface/Ground:  
The potential for contamination of a water source will continue.
  - b. Waste, Hazardous and Solid:  
Any hazardous and solid wastes would remain on site. If wastes were found to be present, a separate action would be required to remove them.
2. Recreation:  
The No Action Alternative would have the affect of a continual presence of organized commercial recreation. This affects the area's natural appearance and reduces opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.
3. Visual Resources:  
The No Action Alternative would have the affect of a continual presence of a visual contrast rating of Class III. The landscape would retain its existing natural character, but the visual impact would be focused on the structures detracting from the panoramic view that Chenik Head provides.
4. Wildlife Resources:  
Unoccupied cabins could lead to unauthorized use for recreational use, hunting or trapping and provide easier staging and access to the area. This could lead to an increased take of hunted wildlife populations in the area.
5. Fire  
Fire would not be used and there would not be any impacts.

C. Impacts of Alternative 1:

Impacts are the same as the Proposed Action, except those impacts caused by burning of structures would not occur.

1. Wildlife Resources:  
Under this alternative, there would be no burning of combustible materials and wildlife would not be displaced by smoke.

2. Fire:  
Fire would not be used and there would not be any impacts.

- D. Residual and Cumulative Impacts:  
There would be a net gain in vegetation ground cover in the long term, since the area would no longer be inhabited and subject to trampling by visitors and smothering by structures.

- E. Mitigation:  
Bare soil areas should be revegetated by transplanting appropriate healthy, live plugs taken from adjacent vegetated areas, or with seed that has been collected on site. Commercial seed mixtures should be avoided as most mixtures are not 100% pure and increase the chance that invasive species could be introduced to the area.

Burning should not occur in mossy areas because of the slow regeneration of mosses.

Materials that emit pollutants in violation of the Clean Air Act should be removed from the structure prior to burning.

Due to the possibility of an escaped fire, a fire crew and equipment, pumps, hose, hand tools and chainsaws, should be present during burning.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- A. List of Preparers:  
Kathy Stubbs – Realty Specialist  
Donna Redding – Archaeologist  
Jeff Denton – Subsistence Coordinator  
Bruce Seppi – Wildlife Biologist  
Debbie Blank – Botanist  
Mike Zaidlicz – Forester  
Dave Kelley – Surface Management Specialist  
Larry Beck – Environmental Protection Specialist  
Chuck Denton – Hydrologist  
Brian Sterbenz – Fire Management Specialist